

The "Rějang" in Malay Pantuns.

BY H. OVERBECK.

Mr. Skeat* in chap. VI (pp. 551-3) of his "Malay Magic" mentions the "Rějangs," the name of the parts, into which, by a curious system, the lunar month is divided. He affirms that "the Malays have embodied this system in a series of mnemonic verses (known as, Sha'er Rějang) of which there are several versions. e.g. the Rějang of 'Che Busu, the "Rějang Sindiran Măiat, and others." In a foot-note, reference is made to a "Sha'er Rějang" published in Singapore, and a list of the Malay symbols, together with an extract from the Rějang of 'Che Busu, is given in the appendix.

I have not yet been able to procure any of the "Sha'ers" referred to above, but I find that the "Rějangs" also appear in Malay pantuns, where they seem to be used to form certain series of those much beloved quatrains. I have in my collections of pantuns three of these series, called "Rějang Siak," "Rějang Sindiran" and "Rějang Sombang" (Sambong?) The latter one, in a version only slightly differing from that in my collection, has been published by Messrs. Koh & Co., Singapore, in their little books, Pantun, Dondang Sayang, Baba Baba Pranakan (Vol. I 1911, Vol. II 1912).

The "Rějang Siak" and the "Rějang Sindiran" merely consist of pantuns, the first word of which is the name of the symbol. The first two pantuns of the "Rějang Sindiran" run as follows:

Kuda hanoman dari Acheh
Di-pachu lalu ka Indragiri
Tuntut ělmu muda yang bisai
Karna ělmu kěnalkan diri.
Kijang měngantok di rumpun buloh
Makan kodok di dalam padi
Tuntut ělmu běrsungoh-sungoh
Karna hidup tunang-nya mati.

Then follow 28 pantuns, the concluding quatrain being

Tigapuluh gěnap bilangan
Buah masak di-atas meja
Sudah těrlepas dari timbangan
Sakalian ummat masok shorga.

The "Rějang Siak" in my collection is unfortunately not complete. The "Rějang Sombang," however, deals with the matter in quite a different way. The first pantun of the version in my collection begins:

"Satu hari bulan rějang-nya kuda"

and in the same way the symbols for the different days of the month are given each in a separate pantun, to each of which three, and in my version beginning from the 21st day, four further quatrains are added, all of which mention the symbol of the day in

*W. W. Skeat, Malay Magic, Macmillan & Co., London 1900.

their first line. The version in my collection ends with the first quatrain of the 30th day, whilst that published by Messrs. Koh & Co. has the full set up to the 31st day.

I could not find out anything definite as to the origin of the "RĚjang Sombang," except that I have been told that it came from Malacca. There seem to be many Javanese words in it, as for instance "lekur" for twenty, and "sa-lawe" (in Koh's version "lima likor") for twenty-five, but the different "hantus" are unknown in Java, as far as I could ascertain, and besides, I was told by a Palembang Malay that "lekur" and "sa-lawe" were the words used in the old style of counting in that part of Sumatra.

I give below a table of the symbols used in the three "RĚjangs," for comparison with those in Skeat's "Malay Magic."

Day	Skeat's Malay Magic.	RĚjang Sombang.	RĚjang Siak.	RĚjang Sindiran.
1	Kuda	Kuda	Kuda	Kuda
2	Kijang	Kijang	Kijang	Kijang
3	Harimau	Harimau	Harimau	Harimau
4	Kuching	Kuching	Kuching	Kuching
5	Sapi	Simpai	Simpai	Simpai
6	Kĕrbau	Kĕrbau	Kĕrbau	Kĕrbau
7	Tikus	Tikus	Tikus	Tikus
8	Lĕmbu	Lĕmbu	Lĕmbu	Lĕmbu
9	Anjing	Anjing	Anjing	Anjing
10	Naga	Naga	Naga	Naga
11	Kambing	Kumbang	Kambing	Kambing
12	Mayang	Mayang	?	Mayang
13	Gajah	Gajah	Gajah	Gajah
14	Singa	Singa	?	Singa
15	Ikan	Ikan	Ikan	Ikan
16	Babi	Babi	Babi	Babi
17	Lang	Lang	Lang	Lang
18	Halipan	Kala	Halipan	Halipan
19	Baning	Halipan	Baning	Baning
20	Hantu	Pulai	?	Hantu
21	Arang	Hantu	?	Arang
22	Orang	Shaitan	?	Orang
23	Laut	Iblis	?	Belalang
24	Pari	Jin	?	Pari
25	Pasek	Jĕmbalang	?	Pasek
26	Gunong	Tĕnggĕlong	?	Pĕlaudok
27	Gula (Kaidei)	Pĕlĕsit	?	Jampok (?)
28	Punai	Polong	?	Landak
29	Daun	Pontianak	?	Ular
30	Sani (?)	Langsuyar	?	Sunti
31	—	Ampat sudara*	—	—

* only Koh's version.